

**Human Rights Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**July 8, 2009**  
**7:30 PM at the home of Jane Brown, Newtonville**

**Attendance:**

Commissioners present: Jane Brown, Muriel Esdale, Marianne Ferguson (Chair), Judy Fischbach, Brenda Krasnow, Sheila Mondschein, and Sona Petrossian

Commissioners absent/regrets: Peter Brown and Susan Thomas

Advisory Council Members present: Dianne Chilingerian, Samuel Glass, Carol Kelley, Susan Rosenthal, and Joan Rubin

Advisory Council Members absent/regrets: Lt. Bruce Apotheker, Ann Capoccia, Homer Franck, Nazik Kazimi, Norman Lazarus, Carleton Merrill, Myrna Offen, Viviana Planine, and Frank Wolpe

Guests present: Lillian Backman and Shirley Farnham

Staff present: Beverly Droz

-----

The meeting was preceded by a pot luck dinner at 6:30pm and everyone thanked Jane Brown for hosting it.

**The meeting opened** at 7:50 pm and was chaired by Marianne Ferguson.

**A motion to accept the 6/10/09 minutes passed.**

For tonight's meeting, Marianne reminded members to give provide committee reports only if they had news or updates and that we had planned on discussing several general committee topics.

**FAIR HOUSING:**

Sheila announced that:

A Mayoral Candidate Forum about fair housing issues will be held on August 13 at the Scandinavian Living Center. An event on reverse mortgages will be hosted by the Senior Center on September 10.

**HRC AWARDS:**

**Discussion of nominations:**

- Judy: we open nominations for the annual awards to former recipients and past HRC members.
- Muriel: we place an ad in "The Newton Tab" calling for nominations from residents.
- Brenda: we contact local groups involved in human rights issues and asked for their nomination suggestions.
- Sona: we could tap organizations that we've worked with in the past for their suggestions.
- [Dianne: a major theater organization that she belongs to sends out an email each year asking all their members, organizations and individuals for nominations for their annual Theater Hero award.](#)
- Marianne stated that the HRC makes the final decision on nominations.
- Bev briefly described organizational and administrative tasks in order to outreach to groups, etc., for nominations and the need of a clear timeline for responses.

Shirley asked if we had considered Representative Peter Koutoujian. Discussion followed that all of our representatives were quite deserving – Rep. Kay Khan, Rep. Ruth Balser and Senator Creem. Sam nominated Audrey Cooper, a long-time Newton resident and activist. Discussion followed and a **motion made to nominate Audrey Cooper for the 2009 HRC award passed.** Bev will contact her.

**BUDGET for FY09-10**

Bev reported that we will again have an operating budget of \$850 for Fiscal Year 2010 (7/1/09 – 6/30/10). The balance of the revolving account is \$464.98. We had gone over our expenditures for FY 08-09 by \$53.64 and the

deduction of that amount from our revolving account had been approved by the Commissioner of Health & Human Services. Bev explained the difference between the annual operating budget and the revolving account.

A **discussion** about fundraising to increase the revolving account followed.

- Marianne suggested that in our paragraph for “The Newton Tab” in which we publicize our meetings and openings on the Advisory Council, we include language reflecting a desire to recruit someone to assist in fundraising.
- Shirley suggested we create a sheet describing the needs of the HRC.
- Bev suggested enlarging the brochure to legal size to incorporate a “contributions” panel.
- Sam inquired about having voluntary dues for members of the HRC but Bev stated that since we were established by City Ordinance she didn’t feel that the Legal Department would approve this measure.
- Muriel suggested that a basket be placed at the HRC events for contributions.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Marianne inquired what skill sets the committee sees as needed and **discussion** followed:

- Muriel added that we need more diversity and people who are willing to work.
- Sheila asked what needed to be done to help with education and program activities.
- Jane stated we needed members to be team players.
- Carol thought it important to highlight the police involvement in the HRC and its mission.
- Dianne suggested that a series of questions be posed to pique the reader’s passion rather than just stating we were looking for potential new members.

Judy, Sona, Suzy, Brenda and Carol agreed to meet to discuss the wording for such an advertisement.

## **PROGRAM**

Marianne brought up the past discussion of the issue of presenting local versus broader subject material.

Brenda stated that at the recent Program Committee meeting, there were three ideas for programs including:

1. Slave trade years ago and the ties with our Newton History Museum
  2. Restorative justice program as detailed at our June HRC meeting
  3. Gay and lesbian issues affecting the city
- Judy suggested that if we had the money, we could have someone like author Dr. Gates come and speak.
  - Suzy suggested that perhaps businesses could be approached about sponsoring such events. It was decided that a small sub-committee could be developed to work on it.
  - Sona reminded the group that the HRC always needs to be prepared to quickly respond if there is an emergency issue that arises, such as a hate crime.
  - Sheila stated that it is good to plan programs that are on point with current issues in Newton such as race and gay and lesbian issues since recent hate incidents have focused on these groups.

Sheila noted a recent article from the “Boston Globe” (“The time to talk about racial divide” by David Harris, 7/4/09) that discusses the need to discuss racial issues both past and present.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.**

## **NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, September 16, 2009**

(Note: This is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday due to Labor Day being on Sept. 7 this year).

Respectfully submitted, Beverly Droz, HRC staff director, and Suzy Rosenthal, HRC Advisory Council member